Consumers Association of Penang

GIVING VOICE TO THE LITTLE PEOPLE...SINCE 1970

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PUBLICATIONS

Stay away from instant noodles to keep healthy

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The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) calls on consumers to avoid eating instant noodles as it is harmful to

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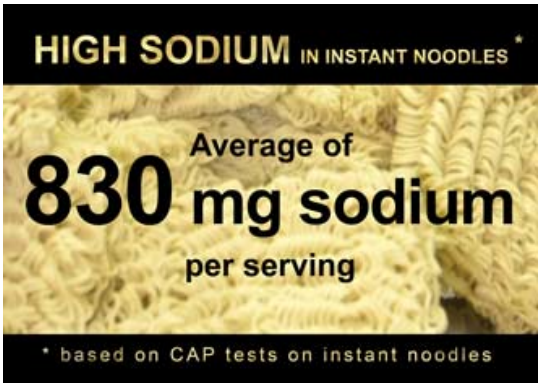
health. Studies have shown that high sodium consumption is linked to a variety of diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, stroke and kidney damage.

In 2004 Malaysians consumed 870 million packets of instant noodles but by 2008 it had increased to more than 1,210 million packets. This is an increase of nearly 40 percent during the period of 4 years.

Instant noodle is a highly processed food that lacks nutritive value. It is a junk food. Every single serving of instant noodle is high in carbohydrates, sodium and other food additives, but low on essential elements such as fibre, vitamins and minerals.

According to the Codex Standards (FAO standards) for instant noodles, acid regulators, flavour enhancers, thickeners, humectants, colours, stabilizers, anti-oxidants, emulsifiers, flour treatment agents, preservatives and anti-caking agents are allowed to use in the making of instant noodles.

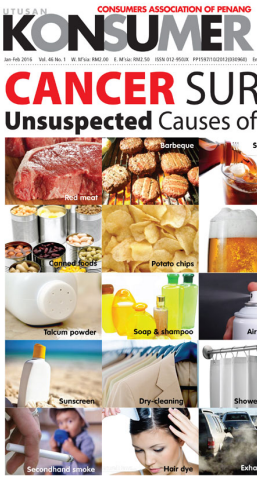
24 of the 136 listed additives in the Codex Standards are sodium salts. And the use of sodium additives is the main reason why instant noodles are high in sodium. High-sodium foods can cause hypertension, heart disease, stroke, kidney damage and other health problems.



Tests conducted by CAP on 10 samples of instant noodles found three samples to contain sodium above 1,000 mg. The average amount of sodium found in the samples was 830 mg. According to the current US Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of sodium for adults and children over 4 years old is 2,400 mg/day. Consumption of instant noodles can easily cause excessive sodium intake as sodium is commonly used in our other daily foods especially from processed and hawker foods.

Another health concern is the reported leaching of dioxin and other hormone-like substances from the plastic container of the cup noodle. As hot water is added harmful substances could seep into the soup.

UTUSAN KONSUMER



SLIDESHOW

CAP TIPS

One of the major concerns with instant noodle is that it can produce oxidised fat and oil if it is not managed properly during the manufacturing process. This is of concern if the cooking oil is not maintained at the proper temperature or the oil is not changed as often as necessary.

Instant noodles are coated with wax to prevent the noodles from sticking together. This can be seen when hot water is added to the noodles. After some time the wax can be seen floating in the water.

The Codex Standards also allow the use of 10,000 mg/kg of the chemical propylene glycol, an anti-freeze ingredient as humectants (help to retain moisture to prevent noodles from drying) in instant noodles. Propylene glycol is readily absorbed and it accumulates in the heart, liver and kidneys causing abnormalities and damage. The chemical is also capable of weakening the immune system.

Instant noodles and the flavouring soup base also contain high amounts of monosodium glutamate (MSG). It is a flavour enhancer used by instant noodle makers to make their shrimp flavours "shrimpier" and beef flavours "beefier". MSG can trigger an allergic reaction in 1 to 2 % of the population. Individuals who are allergic to MSG can get burning sensations, chest and facial flushing or pain and headaches from it.

High sodium consumption is linked to stroke or kidney damage. In Malaysia, there are an estimated 13,000 kidney patients undergoing dialysis. Every year 2,500 people join the ranks of end-stage renal failure patients. Six new cases of stroke occur every hour in Malaysia.

Some of the chemicals found in instant noodles are also capable of causing cancer. For example, dioxin and plasticisers leached from the containers in the presence of hot water. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) ,at least 30 percent of all cancers could be prevented through simple measures such as adopting a healthy diet. Instant noodles are definitely an unhealthy diet which consumers should avoid.

In view of its unhealthy nature, the Consumers Association of Penang calls on the Ministry of Health to launch a campaign to highlight the dangers of instant noodles, which is a popular food among Malaysians.

For the sake of their health consumers should opt for more

LINKS

CAP website in Bahasa Malaysia

CAP website in Chinese

FTA Malaysia

FEATURED VIDEOS

wholesome food.

See **"136 additives allowed in instant noodles"**

Read more about how sodium and MSG affect your health in the CAP Guides, How Much Salt Is Hidden In Your Foods and Is MSG Safe?